

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 01511 161604Z

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4741

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN BF

SUBJ: CIVAIR - PRE-CLEARANCE BAHAMASAIR

REF: (A) NASSAU 760, (B) STATE 115196

1. REF A RAISED THE QUESTION OF PRE-CLEARANCE OF SOME BAHAMAS-AIR FLIGHTS TO MIAMI. REF B PUT OFF THE MATTER IN ORDER TO AVOID INTRODUCING NEW ISSUES INTO PRE-CLEARANCE DISCUSSIONS.

2. THE MATTER HAS AGAIN BEEN RAISED WITH THE EMBASSY BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR PRE-CLEARANCE. WE RECOMMEND THAT ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR PRE-CLEARANCE OF AT LEAST SOME BAHAMASAIR FLIGHTS, WITH NOVEMBER 1 AS A PROPOSED STARTING DATE.

3. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION BASED ON FOLLOWING REASONS:

(A) ARTICLE 6 OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING COMMITS THE US TO EXTEND PRE-CLEARANCE TO ANY CARRIER OPTING FOR IT. PARAGRAPH A OF THAT ARTICLE DOES GIVE THE INSPECTION AGENCIES THE RIGHT TO DELAY COMPLIANCE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY PERSONNEL OR FACILITIES. A DELAY ON THIS REQUEST DOES NOT APPEAR IN ORDER.

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PAGE 02 NASSAU 01511 161604Z

(B) IT IS AN APPROPRIATE MOVE IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF

US/GCOB RELATIONS. PRE-CLEARANCE MUST NOT BE LOOKED ON ONLY AS A MEANS OF SERVING US CARRIERS. BAHAMASAIR IS THE NATIONAL FLAG CARRIER OF THE BAHAMAS AND SUBSTANTIALLY GOVERNMENT-OWNED.

(C) THERE IS CURRENTLY A PROPOSAL AWAITING COMMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT ON GREATER USE OF VISA WAIVERS AVAILABLE TO BAHAMIANS UNDER THE PRE-CLEARANCE SYSTEM TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE HEAVY NIV WORKLOAD OF THE EMBASSY (25,000 NIV'S PER YEAR) (SEE NASSAU'S A-157). THIS PROPOSAL STEMS FROM A RECOMMENDATION MADE BY THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSPECTORS FOLLOWING AN INSPECTION OF THE POST IN JUNE. IF THE PROPOSAL IS APPROVED AND IS TO BE EFFECTIVE, PRE-CLEARANCE WILL HAVE TO BE EXTENDED TO BAHAMASAIR FLIGHTS.

(D) THE WORKLOAD ON THE PRE-CLEARANCE TEAM HAS BEEN EASED BY THE REDUCTIONS OF FLIGHTS BY US CARRIERS. PANAM HAS DROPPED THREE DAILY FLIGHTS AND THERE ARE NO PLANS TO REINSTATE THEM. EASTERN HAS DROPPED FROM 11 TO SEVEN FLIGHTS FOR THE SLACK SEASON. DURING THE PEAK WINTER SEASON EASTERN PLANS TO ONLY REINSTATE TWO FLIGHTS FOR A DAILY TOTAL OF NINE.

(E) BAHAMASAIR FLIGHTS DO NOT APPEAR TO REPRESENT A HEAVY WORKLOAD FOR THE PRE-CLEARANCE TEAM. THEIR BAC 111 AIRCRAFT HAVE A SEATING CAPACITY OF 79. ON A MONTHLY BASIS THE AIRLINE'S MIAMI FLIGHTS ARE RUNNING AT ABOUT 40 PERCENT CAPACITY. AT PRESENT THERE ARE THREE DAILY DIRECT FLIGHTS TO MIAMI AT 8:00 A.M., 3:15 P.M. AND 8:30 P.M. A FLIGHT AT 10:15 A.M. DAILY HAS BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL OCTOBER 28. INITIALLY BAHAMASAIR IS INTERESTED IN HAVING THREE DAYTIME FLIGHTS PRE-CLEARED.

(F) BEGINNING OCTOBER 15 THERE WILL BE 12 ADDITIONAL US CUSTOMS EMPLOYEES ATTACHED TO THE PRE-CLEARANCE TEAM AT NASSAU'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FOR AT LEAST 30 DAYS TO CONDUCT TESTS OF ALTERNATIVE FACILITY SYSTEMS. THE PRESENCE OF THE EXTRA PERSONNEL SHOULD MAKE PHASING IN OF BAHAMASAIR TO THE PRE-CLEARANCE SYSTEM EASIER.

4. THE FOREGOING HAS BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE HEADS OF THE US IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS SEGMENTS OF THE PRE-CLEARANCE TEAM IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NASSAU 01511 161604Z

NASSAU. CUSTOMS HAD NO COMMENT. IMMIGRATION HEAD FELT THAT THIS WOULD BE VIEWED FAVORABLY BY HIS AGENCY SINCE INSIS SHORT STAFFED THROUGHOUT THE US, THUS THIS WOULD LIGHTEN THE LOAD IN MIAMI. HOWEVER HE DID POINT OUT THAT THE PRE-CLEARANCE TEAM AT NASSAU IS NOW AT ONLY FIFTY PER CENT OF ITS AUTHORIZED STAFF -- INS IS SHORT THREE MEN, CUSTOMS TWO AND AGRICULTURE ONE.
SPIERS

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